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Interim Guidance for Animal Care Operations

March 24, 2020

This guidance is provided for animal agriculture workers to include those employed in: veterinary health; manufacturing and distribution of animal medical materials and supplies, such as animal vaccines, animal drugs, feed, and bedding, etc.; raising of animals; animal production operations; transportation of live animals, animal medical supplies; transportation of deceased animals for disposal; livestock markets, including live bird markets, slaughter and packing plants; equine operations and companion animal/pet stores and shelters; veterinary services for equine, companion animals, and for businesses considered essential; and related support/service operations.

Background:

In December 2019, a new respiratory disease called novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was discovered. COVID-19 is caused by a virus, SARS-CoV-2, that is part of a larger family of viruses called coronaviruses.

On March 20, 2020, Governor Cuomo signed the New York State on "[PAUSE](#)" [Executive Order](#), a directive designed to slow the spread of COVID-19. It includes a new directive that all non-essential businesses statewide must close in-office personnel functions effective at 8PM on Sunday, March 22, 2020. [Essential businesses](#) are exempt from this guidance. Animal care operations, as defined below, have been deemed essential and are exempt under the Executive Order.

Animal Care Operations:

For purposes of **Executive Order 202.6 and 202.8**, **animal care operations** are defined as the following businesses and businesses conducting the below activities:

Livestock/Equine/Captive Cervids

- Feeding
- Barn or facility maintenance, stall cleaning and enclosure repair
- Turnout and exercise
- Essential hoof maintenance and veterinary care

What steps should employees take to protect themselves against COVID-19?

Practice Social Distancing:

Keep at least 6 feet distance from others. Avoid unnecessary appointments.

Cleaning/Sanitizing:

All facilities should continue performing regular routine cleaning and sanitization of their facilities.

- Transportation necessary to meet any of the above functions.
- Agribusiness that supports any of the above functions.

Companion Animals

- Care and feeding of companion animals in shelters, kennels, rescue operations and pet stores.
- Pet food manufacturers, distributors, and retailers.
- Essential veterinary care, including spay/neuter, treatment for infectious disease.
- Animal shelters receiving seized, lost or abandoned animals.
- Adoption of animals from within New York State.
- Pet boarding facilities.
- Service dog training and care.

If a business does not fall within this guidance, but you believe that it is essential or it is an entity providing essential services or functions, you may request designation as an essential business. **To request designation as an essential business, please [click here](#).**

Animal Care/Boarding Facilities

If you have an animal at a privately-owned facility, terms regarding client use and visitation rests with that business owner. Social distancing must be adhered to.

For equine: It is permissible to have horse owners as the primary providers of daily care for their own horses at boarding facilities, however business owners and horse owners must collaborate to minimize the number of people in the stable and to adhere to social distancing.

** There is no evidence that animals, including pets, in the United States have been a source of infection/spread for this new coronavirus. To date, CDC has not received any reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19; although it has been reported abroad. **

FOR EMPLOYEES

Cleaning/Disinfecting and Social Distancing

All privately-owned facilities must practice social distancing, and proper cleaning and sanitizing of the facility. This includes:

- Regular hand washing with soap and water, for at least 20 seconds, should be done:
 - Before and after eating;
 - After sneezing, coughing, or nose blowing;
 - After touching face, hair, cellphone and/or clothing;
 - After using the restroom;
 - Before handling food;
 - After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated; and

- After using shared equipment and supplies.
- If soap and water is unavailable, individuals may use an alcohol-based sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of elbow.
- Dispose of soiled tissues immediately after use in a trash receptacle.

It is encouraged to post [signage](#) with handwashing procedures in prominent locations to promote hand hygiene. Alternative languages for the [signage](#) are also available.

Clean and disinfect buildings and equipment as outlined in this [guidance](#).

For additional information, visit the links below:

- NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets
<https://agriculture.ny.gov/coronavirus>
- NYS Department of Health
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/home>
- CDC COVID Guidance for Animals
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/animals.html>
- CDC COVID FAQ for Animals
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#animals>
- CDC COVID Guidance for Pet Owners, If In Isolation
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/interim-guidance-managing-people-in-home-care-and-isolation-who-have-pets.html>